



By Elaine Peake

"It's a Feather in Your Hat to Wear Lacey Millinery." That slogan with the Lacey name executed in feathers was a trademark of the Lacey sisters for many years. In fact more than a generation of Calgary women have worn — or coveted — a Lacey hat.

Their clientele included most of the socially prominent matrons of the time but their business had a very humble beginning and the first years were full of problems.

Elizabeth Lacey and her sister Mabel Tolson were born in East Calgary, where their British-born father was a stationary engineer. They attended Colonel Walker school and later moved to the vicinity of Seventeenth Avenue and Eighth Street Southwest. It was in this home, during the lean years of the early thirties, that they began making handicrafts and novelties to sell to earn a little money.

But hats were their first love, so they ventured into a tiny business on Seventeenth Avenue calling it, grandly, "The Mayfair." Their father was very artistic and his talents apparently continued in his children. In addition to the talented sisters, a brother, Frank, became a commercial artist now living in California. It was he who designed their first unique shop window display, as well as the logo which became their trademark. They credit their window display for bringing in their first customer — in a very unexpected way.

"Our brother had created a wrought iron effect from cardboard painted black, and added a green backdrop. This fascinated passing children on our street, where there weren't many stores," says Elizabeth. "Finally one day a woman came into the shop and remarked that her small son had told her that she must come in and see what was behind the window. She became our first customer."

Mabel, who did most of the millinery work, designed and made a suede hat, gloves and purse for this lady to take on an upcoming trip to Montreal. Mabel had copied illustrations from a Paris style book ("Which cost five dollars. We were horrified at that!"). In those days styles took much longer to spread across the country and the

They Talked Through Their Hats

And Calgary's fashionable women listened

Paris design was out of place in Calgary. But when she reached Montreal this well-to-do Calgarian was wearing the fashion of the day.

The Lacey sisters made their own hats at first from necessity. Wholesalers in the East refused to extend them credit because many milliners were closing their doors at this time. During the depression a new hat was a luxury not many could afford. They learned of a fine leather company in England and began ordering leather in various colours. A very popular item was a combination of hand-made leather gloves and a hat made perhaps of velour, trimmed with the same leather as the gloves. "We couldn't make enough of those," said Mabel.

In spite of hard times, their business began to thrive, due in part to their excellent location near the exclusive Mount Royal district. Their beautiful creations finally brought them the very cream of Calgary society, many of whom are personal friends today. And the customer need never worry that she might meet a friend wearing the same hat (horror of horrors!) because all their hand-made hats were exclusive designs.

As their business flourished, they moved downtown to larger premises and the eastern wholesalers decided that they were a good risk after all. But the Lacey sisters didn't think very highly of the sample hats that the eastern companies saw fit to send to Calgary, so they soon began to make buying trips to such cities as Montreal, Toronto and New York.

Those were exciting trips for the two

Calgary girls. They were entertained lavishly in the best places in each city, and became acquainted with some of the top designers of the day. "And the materials! There were floors and floors of straw braid and ribbon and every kind of trim imaginable. It was a thrill just to feast our eyes on them," said Elizabeth.

After the war they travelled to Los Angeles and Seattle to work with designers in these cities. This experience gave an added flair to their creations that made them even more distinctive and they learned to add extra touches to the ready-made hats which they also carried in stock.

Hundreds of Calgary women have owned hats made by the Lacey sisters and they remember them fondly. Many have even saved a favourite one, tucked away carefully in its own special box. (Women carried their Lacey hat boxes as proudly as they wore their hats!) It will probably never be worn again, but it is still a delight to its owner.

The Lacey sisters closed their doors for the last time in 1969 and today they are enjoying their retirement in gracious surroundings. And do they miss their shop? "My goodness no! We're far too busy. We're out somewhere every day, and we love our life."

They dress fashionably but Elizabeth admits rather sheepishly that she doesn't even own a hat. And Elizabeth speaks for them both when she says, "All in all, the many years we were in business in our beloved city were interesting ones. We loved making and selling hats to our beloved customers. Bless them all!" †



The Lacey sisters today, Mabel left, and Elizabeth.

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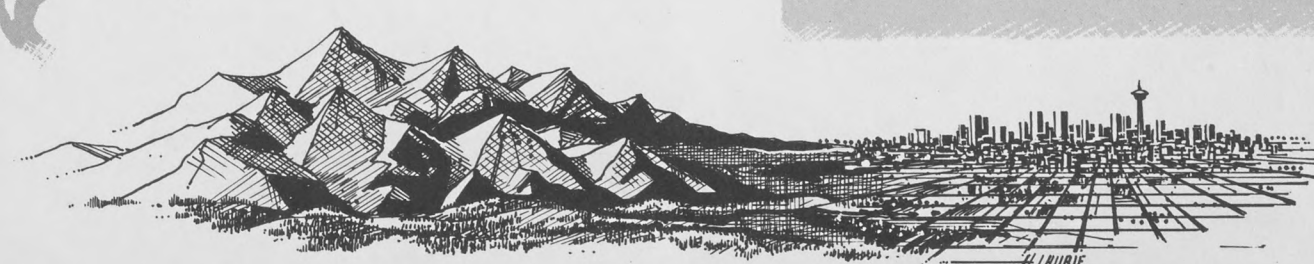
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- * Stampede Park
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(Millions a Year)
- * Bowness Park
(Ideal For the Family)
- * Reader Rock Gardens
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- * Riley Park
(With a Cricket Pitch)
- * Glenmore Reservoir
(Sail Boat Haven)
- * Heritage Park
(Must be Seen)
- * Glenbow Museum
(Fascinating Displays)
- * Centennial Planetarium
(Canada's Newest)
- * Lancaster Bomber Display
(W.W. II Warrior)
- * Calgary Tower
(Simply Magnificent)
- * Crescent Road View Point
(Looking South)
- * Blackfoot Trail View Point
(Looking West)
- * Sarcree Trail View Point
(Looking East)
- * McMahon Stadium
(Home of Stampeders)
- * University of Calgary
(Still Growing)
- * Southern Alberta Institute of
Technology
(Canada's Largest)
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- * Glenmore Park
(Park on a Lake)
- * Military Museums
(Calgary's Military History)



CALGARY

TOURIST & CONVENTION ASSOCIATION

MINI MAP





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Your Chamber

Chamber Calendar

June 4th: Ad & Sales Bureau Dinner Meeting in the Belaire Room, Calgary Inn. Cocktails at 6:30, dinner at 7:30. Election of 1975-76 officers.

June 6: Chamber Council Meeting, 12 noon, Turner Valley Room, Palliser Hotel.

June 20: Chamber General Meeting, 12 noon, Alberta & Marquis Rooms, Palliser Hotel. Speaker: Harvie Andre, M.P., P.C., on "Government Spending — Can it be Controlled?"

July 9th: Ad & Sales Whoop-Up Breakfast, Mezzanine Floor, Palliser Hotel. The whooping begins at 7:30 a.m.

THE CALGARY CHAMBER WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS SINCE APRIL 17, 1975

NEW COMPANIES

Romeo and Juliet Inn Ltd.	Lino Massolin; Alf Farnese
Executive Leasing	Leonard D. Rice
Holly Management Ltd.	J. W. Hollicky
Bar X Steak House Ltd.	R. A. Smith; R. C. Smith
Calgary Roman Catholic School Dist. #1	P. A. Dawson; G. E. Fitzgerald
Solar Gas Turbines Ltd.	Cary B. Alexander
Konyi Holding Ltd.	Frank Konyi
Gage Educational Publishing Ltd.	Ted Lucas
Irish Cottage Shop	Leo F. Cote
Agro Machine	Carmen E. Carson; Fred R. Hunt
Unigard Carburetor	T. L. Utigard
Honeywell Information Systems	W. S. Denney
Cal-Alta Concrete & Construction Ltd.	H. E. Browne; L. R. Sommerville
Canadian Hydrocarbons Ltd.	Anthony C. Rooney; Harold R. Allsopp
Equity Realty Ltd.	James Jackson
Cooper Appraisals Ltd.	G. A. Brown
Barnes Security Services Ltd.	R. Boland; M. Russell
Quintana Exploration Co.	R. C. Galloway; L. J. Richards
Mustang Machinery Ltd.	C. J. Simmons
Jude's Gold, Frankincense & Myrrh Ltd.	Judi A. Wilder
Westward Motor Inn	O. M. Sashkiw; M. Pelland
Tiffany's Restaurant	G. Christopher; Mrs. G. Christopher
The Moose Factory	Steve Singer
Borak Lawn & Garden Ltd.	R. G. Jensen

NEW REPRESENTATIVES

W. C. Harvey	Pacific Petroleum
Mike Wozniak	Traco Manufacturing Ltd.
J. W. Melymick	Industrial Development Bank

REPRESENTATIVES

"Job Exploration by Students" program needs cooperation of Business

The Calgary Chamber of Commerce requests employers in the business community to give the city's potential high school drop-outs a chance to gain practical work experience by participating in a new summer employment program called "Job Exploration by Students."

The pilot program will allow students in the 14 to 19-year-old age group, who are uncertain about their future careers, to discover the world of work through one or more career-oriented employment experiences during the summer months. The support of employers and trade and professional associations is being sought in order to provide employment for approximately 50 potential dropouts.

Participating students, who will be suggested by high school counsellors, will be matched with potential employers through the program's local administrative board consisting of business, school, and manpower representatives. Because the program aims at providing participants with valuable work experience, it is hoped that jobs given will be of a calibre capable of providing them with a positive outlook.

At the conclusion of the summer, student participants will hopefully decide to return to school with a fixed goal, or discover a full-time vocation.

In addition to giving students an opportunity to develop expertise and confidence on the job, this program will also help combat the high unemployment rates of this age group and give employers a chance to find some valuable young people to fit into their future plans.

Sponsored by the Federal Department of Manpower and Immigration in co-operation with the Chamber of Commerce, the program will utilize existing resources currently working in the same area, including the Calgary office of Canada Manpower, the Calgary Board of Education, the Gateway Project of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Calgary, and the Alberta Department of Manpower and Labor.

For further information, contact Dr. C. A. Prentice, chairman of the Chamber of Commerce Student Employment Committee, 284-6743.

Another Tar Sands Trip Planned

The Chamber trip to Ft. McMurray and the Tar Sands on June 19th was filled within a few days of notice. Due to the tremendous interest generated by the membership, there will be another such trip at a later date, hopefully before the end of June. Those who have mailed checks and otherwise indicated an interest in the trip have been put on a list for first choice on the next one, now in the planning stage.

Chamber Membership Directory & Buyers' Guide Available

The Chamber of Commerce Membership Directory and Buyers' Guide, which you have recently received, is a first attempt to provide the membership with such a complete and easily accessible source of membership information. We sincerely regret the occasional errors which have occurred and assure you that these should be corrected for the next years' guide. We also regret the delay in delivery which was due partly to the Winnipeg printer and partly to the customs department. However, we feel that, on the whole, this directory and guide has proven to be a successful venture for the Chamber.

